RESTORATION REVIEW

If all men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself. — *James Madison*

In This Issue:
Can A Nation Be Christian?

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The Doe of the Dawn: A Christian World View …

CAN A NATION BE CHRISTIAN?

I am composing this installment of this series in the heart of southeast Asia, in the ancient kingdom of Siam, known today as Thailand. Since barely 1% of its population professes to be Christian, no one claims that this is a Christian nation. In fact the king, who embodies the nation, could not legally be a Christian. He, like most everyone else in Thailand, is a Buddhist, though there is a considerable number of Moslems in the southern provinces. Thailand stands alone in this part of the world in allowing freedom of religion. It is consequently inundated with missionaries, who seem to have minimal effect upon the Thai people even after a century of effort. This is why most of them work among the subcultures: the Chinese, the refugees from Communist countries, the many tribal peoples, all of whom are more receptive to the gospel than the Thais.

On this same journey I was a week in Japan where again no more than 1% of the population even professes the Christian faith, and this after three centuries of missionary effort. The religion is Shintoism and Buddhism, which have a close alliance, and no one says that Japan is a Christian nation.

But how about the western nations? Are not the European nations Christian, where a majority professes to believe in Christ and where a cathedral or a village church is a common sight? Is not the United States a Christian nation? Australia? Canada? Mexico? When “Christian” is used in its broadest sense the nations of the west, and perhaps a few others, are described as Christian.

My thesis herein is that there is no nation in the world that can properly be called Christian, nor has there ever been such a nation in all of human history. It is unlikely that there ever will be this side of the millennium when “the kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rev. 11:15), but this may have to be left as an open question. It is probable that the world as we know it, for the foreseeable future at least, will never have a Christian nation. Our thesis further asserts that nations by their very nature are self-serving, even immoral, and cannot and will not be truly Christian. The most that we can hope for and work for is that a nation be just. But being Christian transcends justice in that love and mercy are the dominating virtues.

I have some obligation to define a Christian nation, though it is not easy. Is it a matter of percentages? If 60% of the people are truly, not just professing, Christians, would it be a Christian nation? 80%? 90%? Might the vast majority be Christians and yet the *nation*, a corporate entity ruled by laws (supposedly), not be Christian? Might a nation be great, free, democratic, and even humanitarian without being Christian? Might it be considerably influenced in its origin, history, constitution, laws, foreign affairs, politics, and economy and yet not be really Christian, just as an individual might be influenced by Christianity and yet not be a Christian?

For a nation to be Christian it would have to have those qualities essential to the Christian faith: a love for God and man as reflected in the life of Christ; an ethic of self-denial that puts others first; a manner of life motivated by mercy and compassion. A Christian nation, like a Christian, would not seek an advantage; it would seek the welfare of other nations before its own, even to its own hurt. Its leaders would be ruled by God and Christian imperatives, not by expediency.

Such a nation would not of course be perfect in Christian virtues, just as no Christian is perfect, but if truly Christian it would be exemplary among all nations of the world in seeking first the kingdom of God.

It is surely true that “righteousness exalts a nation,” as the Scriptures assure us, but where in all the world is such a nation?

Various myths about our own nation have nurtured the doctrine of a “Christian America.” These include the notion that this nation was founded by people in search of religious freedom, which is only partly true at best. Another is that our pilgrim fathers were exemplary Christians, which does not take into account their presumed mandate to destroy the Indian “savages” like Israel did the Canaanites, or their persecution of the Quakers.

Another myth is that the American Revolution was inspired by a spirit of religious revival and was therefore a “righteous” revolt against an ungodly nation, when in fact it was as “politically” motivated as revolts usually are. The main complaint of the colonies was the “taxation without representation” of the British parliament, which was not as oppressive as the Declaration of Independence implies, and no different from the way Puerto Rico and Washington, D. C. (who are taxed without representative voice) are

treated today. To be sure, colonial America was about the freest place in the world in the 18th century (and they knew it!), and the British threat to that freedom was not nearly as great as it was made to be, which explains why there was so much loyalist sentiment.

Cut it as you will, the colonists rebelled against Britain for being "oppressive" while they themselves held slaves, murdered Indians, and persecuted the unorthodox, "witches" as well as Quakers. Colonial America was hardly exemplary in its Christian faith, but has our country ever been exemplary, despite some definite Christian influences? Not only have we written dark pages into our history by our treatment of Indians and blacks, but we staged one of the most gruesome civil wars ever, which not only questioned our presumed "Christian origins'" but threatened our survival as a nation.

Another major misconception is that our founding fathers were models of Christian liberty and based the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and the Bill of Rights upon the Bible, thus giving rise to the myth that God had raised up America to be the millennial kingdom. That our nation's founders knew the Bible (as did most educated people of their day), quoted it, and were influenced by it is true, but we can hardly conclude from this that they were serious disciples of Christ, or even that they were consistent in their love of freedom.

Most of them (James Madison would probably be an exception) were deists and humanists who rejected anything supernatural in religion, though they did believe in God and invoked his providential care upon the young nation. Yet they viewed as superstition such basic Christian beliefs as the deity and resurrection of Christ.

While George Washington fought the British in the name of freedom, it do not bother him to own 153 men, women, and children as slaves, whom he never freed, while Thomas Jefferson owned 200 slaves while writing about "unalienable rights" and "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

If the righteousness that exalts a nation is to be found anywhere, it would be in its courts of justice. But the highest court of our nation has sometimes seriously sinned against the most basic human rights. The *Dred Scott* decision of 1857 classed millions of our fellow Americans as *property,* the chattel of their owners, with no more rights than their cattle. In the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case of 1896 the Supreme Court upheld a lower court's ruling that a Louisiana man, one-eighth Negro, could not occupy a railroad car designated for whites only. The court rejected the complaint that "the enforced separation of the two races stamps the colored race with a badge of inferiority." This is the case in

which Justice Harlan, the lone dissenter, wrote those famous words in protest: “In view of the Constitution, in the eye of the law, there is in this country no superior, dominant, ruling class of citizens. There is no caste here. Our constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens.” While that is an eminently Christian statement, it was the *minority* opinion of the Court of 1896, a minority of one!

I recall from my boyhood days in Dallas the continued effects of this ruling. The streetcars were segregated with signs designating “Colored” and “White” sections, with the coloreds always seated in the back. When there was standing room only, a black person, boarding at the front, would have to worm her way to the rear so as to *stand* in her proper place. If there were seats available in the “White” section but not the “Colored,” she still had to go to the rear and *stand.* I grew up practicing this sort of discrimination, and the Supreme Court of our “Christian nation” had’ ruled that such practices did not treat the Negroes as inferior!

And only the judgment of God can reveal the horrendous effects of a more recent Supreme Court decision (1973) that has projected us into a program of mass killing comparable to anything invented by Nazi Germany, the unthinkable practice of “abortion on demand.” The current rate is 1.5 million abortions a year, many of which are late-term pregnancies. Some babies live despite efforts to kill them, and medical people are aghast at what to do about this “dreaded complication,” which is sometimes resolved by allowing the child to die through inattention.

It is nonetheless the case that the United States has more going for it in terms of Christian influence than any other nation, and its Judeo-Christian heritage is the main reason why it is the greatest country in the world. This is not a prejudicial view, for it was expressed by Alexis de Tocqueville, the French historian in about 1829, that the Christian faith had made young America the most enlightened and the freest of all nations. Another outsider, G. K. Chesterton, in the early 1900’s referred to America as a nation with the soul of a church.

The principles of the Protestant Reformation were partly responsible for this influence, especially the biblical principle of inherent rights which the reformers put before the “divine right” of monarchs. The Reformation principle of the fallenness of man also influenced the colonists, persuading them that all men are equal and dependent on a high power.

There is thus inherent in our nation's founding documents the conviction that man not only has a Creator who governs in the affairs of men, but that man is incapable of directing his own way or being his own lawgiver and judge. Man is not to trust even himself. He must be ruled by laws, not by men, and these laws are natural and God-given. Law cannot therefore be what some judge or fuhrer says it means. It can be only what God says it is. Our founding fathers would therefore have been uneasy with the statement of a recent Supreme Court judge: "The law is what the Court says it is."

These facts support the thesis that while America has been uniquely blessed with a substantial Judeo-Christian heritage, it has nonetheless, like other nations, been guilty of cruelty, greed, and oppression. We have had our Christian influences, but we have not been all that Christian. While we are a nation uniquely founded upon principles of justice, equality, and freedom, we have ourselves proved our founding fathers right (just as they themselves proved it!) that man is not to be trusted with such blessings, and so there must be laws to protect the dispossessed. It is ironical that a nation so blessed with liberating principles has been somewhat less than exemplary in its treatment of its most deprived people.

Until recent years Americans have had a positive if not romantic attitude toward their heritage. The national anthem, the unfurling of Old Glory, the pledge of allegiance which declares we are a nation under God, and the ceremonies of the Fourth of July have had deep meaning. But in the aftermath of Vietnam, Watergate, and various foreign entanglements that our first president warned against there is considerable disenchantment with such notions as "love for God and country." Our flag waving over the land of the free and the home of the brave no longer arouses the feelings it once did. An alarming number of our people seem to be ashamed of being Americans.

We Christians in America should have an informed, balanced view. Like our Lord, we are not *of* this world even though we are *in* it. As citizens of two kingdoms we will be responsible to both, but we will realize that all nations of the earth are by their very nature at enmity with God and are not and cannot be truly Christian. We are to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, permeating our nation and this world with Christian goodness, until such time as the One who sits upon the throne makes all things new, which will include a transformation of the nations of the world.

As informed Christians we know that America did not lose her virginity in Vietnam and that sin in Washington did not begin with Richard Nixon and Watergate. America has never been a virgin. She was born in sin and shaped in iniquity amidst sinful revolution, as

nations usually are. But like fallen man, our nation is a mixture of good and evil, and we believe it has ingredients in its heritage that makes for greatness. We can make a more responsible Christian response to our kind of world with this more balanced view.

Like Jacob who leaned upon his staff even in his dying hour, we realize that we are pilgrims in this world, regardless of earthly citizenship, and our staff is never beyond our reach. We are on our way home. As a pilgrim community we are in this world to be a blessing. Being a blessing to our own nation begins with an honest evaluation of where we really stand in terms of the values and principles we cherish. —the Editor

> The Christian world view teaches a unified view of truth. Its principles deal in absolutes that do not vary according to circumstances but should, in fact, govern the actions of man as he responds to constantly changing conditions. - *John W. Whitehead*

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Travel Letter …

FROM THE LAND OF THE MIKADO

It really isn't the land of the Mikado anymore, Mikado referring to the emperor. So when you see President Reagan meeting with the emperor of Japan, you know that it is only protocol. The worship of the Mikado, which runs deep in Japanese antiquity, ended with World War 2 and the American Occupation when the emperor god was left out of Japan's new constitution. So ended Shintoism as the nation's official religion. But Christian missionaries in this land of 120 million souls, with hardly 1% of them even nominally Christian, will tell you that it is at least possible, if not probable, that the constitution will be re-written, that emperor worship will be reestablished, that Shintoism will again be the official religion, and that Christianity will be outlawed.

Since Francis Xavier came to Japan 400 years ago missionaries have struggled to make this a Christian nation, with comparatively little result, even with the influx of hundreds of missionaries and millions of dollars since World War 2. While nearly everyone is nominally a Shintoist or a Buddhist, even these religions are not taken seriously. Japan

appears to be a-religious, with little or no interest in religion. It is as if religion did not exist. When I asked my host, in whose home in old Tokyo I now sit, Moto Nomura, a Japanese national and a Church of Christ minister, what the Japanese worship, he replied, *Money!* Their main interest is in money and the things that money will buy. They are of course strongly family-oriented, as they have been for centuries. In fact there is a family-like feeling about the country, which provides the standard of right or wrong, more than any religion does.

My friend Moto explained that while the Japanese have no concept of sin they do have a concept of shame. They are shamed if they depart from the recognized standards of society. Group thought or national pride thus provides a certain kind of humanistic ethic. It is difficult for any Japanese to go contrary to that standard, which may explain why they are reluctant to accept the Christian faith, for being a Christian conflicts with basic Japanese traditions.

And yet there are many admirable qualities. about these delightful people. They are hard-working, progressive, courteous, humble, intelligent, and fiercely competitive. In our country the Japanese Americans are the most prosperous of all our minority groups. They haven't the slightest interest in welfare programs or handouts. They only want a chance to work and work they will. In their own nation they have risen from the humiliation and devastation of war to become the most prosperous state in Asia and one of the most prosperous in the world, all within a generation. Their streets are safer than our own and they seem to have both crime and poverty under control. One missionary from the States told me that his children were safer here than back home. Another, who has been here over 30 years, told me that he planned to die and be buried here. "This is my home now," he said, pleased with his adopted country, though not a citizen. Naturalization is a very difficult process for any foreigner.

I preceded the President to this "land of the Sun" by only a few days. His coming placed Tokyo under virtual martial law with some 20,000 policemen on security. As Moto and I watched the event on TV, with U.S. and Japanese flags waving side by side and the heads of state shaking hands and conferring, my Japanese friend, who suffered terribly during the war, sighed: "There would have been no way to have imagined any such thing in the 1940's." But now, a few decades later, Japan and the U.S. have an opportunity to work together in bringing peace and prosperity to all of Asia if not to all the world.

I was interested in the attitude of the Japanese toward Reagan's visit, not from the perspective of the media, but from the rank and file where I had contact. One Japanese Christian told me, "You come for peace but your President comes for war." This reflects a gnawing fear of these people. They strongly distrust "the big Bear" who lurks not far from their island nation, and they trust the U.S., but they have had their fill of war and want no more of it. They fear Reagan is out to get them involved in a massive defense program, and they don't want to get that close to war. And yet they are realists and know that defense makes sense. One gets the impression that they don't want to think about it. They are presently more prosperous than ever before in their history — Tokyo bristles with business and economic vigor — and they do not want that threatened. They also want the U.S. and the rest of the world to keep on driving their automobiles and consuming thousands of other of their products.

One gets the impression that these folk can do most anything that is technologically possible. Their bullet trains are the envy of the world, zipping along easily at 120 miles an hour in super comfort. They already have the know-how to make the trains go even faster, much faster. Their problem is finding out how to stop them! They expect soon to have a magnetic train that will zip along without even touching the tracks.

When one thinks of Church of Christ preachers coming from Texas and Tennessee to this non-Judeo-Christian culture, one rooted in Buddhistic and secular humanism, it is another story. One fact alone tells much of the story: non-instrument Churches of Christ have sent about 200 Japanese to Christian schools in the U.S. to prepare them to serve the church in their native land, which would appear to be the way to do it. Of that number only *two* are still in the church, my host being one of those.

We are not to be surprised to find a transplantation of our hideous partyism. Unfortunately a few hours on Japan Air Lines is no cure for sectarianism. So we have the same ugly divisions here among our people as back home. There are about 50 Christian Church missionaries here, the largest contingency of any Protestant group, and they enjoy fellowship with each other, including occasional rallies. The missionaries from the Church of Christ are much fewer, and they do not seem to offer much support to each other, representing as they do persuasions from "moderate" to right wing. Hardly any of them, save Moto, who is supported largely by "premill" churches in the States, has any workable relationship with the "instrumental" missionaries.

There are a number of Japanese preachers in this picture. The missionaries referred to above, beside Moto, are Americans. The party spirit has been passed along to the nationals, so the lines are about as firmly drawn in this pagan land as back in Tennessee and Texas. Moto, who has labored for Christ in his native land for 22 years, says the great mistake the Church of Christ missions has been a failure to cultivate Christian character in its leaders. Some of the American missionaries have been dogmatic and pontifical, and he names a Japanese or two who ought to be in the penitentiary. Many American dollars have done more harm than good, with some Japanese lining their pockets and acquiring church property as their personal property. He named four instances where a "Church of Christ" became the property of a Japanese national who has no interest in "church" business.

Moto admires the "instrumental" missionaries for holding control of property and not allowing this to happen. He also says they have something very important that "we" don't have: *they love each other,* and, he adds: *they smile at each other.*

The older Japanese workers have tasted the bitterness of our partyism in their visits to the States. In one of our meetings one of them, speaking in Japanese of course, told of how he was in a southern city with no place to go. He searched out a Church of Christ but there was no one around. A Mormon lady saw that he was forlorn and took him to her home. Finally locating the address of an elder in the Church of Christ, the kindly Mormon delivered him to the man's home. Seeing that he was Japanese, the elder questioned him as to what kind of Church of Christ he belonged to in Japan. Learning that he had an organ in his church, the American then and there turned his Japanese brother from his door.

It was the kind of sin that crucified our Lord. We can be thankful that many, if not most, of our Church of Christ people are no longer as sinfully sectarian as that. But we have not yet overcome. It was a sad story to hear, by translation, from a brother who only wanted what we all want, to be received as an equal. And all alone in a foreign land. It is unthinkable, and it gives us pause to ask what we have done to our people to lead them to be so grossly rude, *in the name of Christ!*

I was pleased to be a part of one of the first gatherings ever of all three major wings of our people, and we now count the old Disciples who have now more or less disappeared into a union of denominations, dating from 1940. A few of them who are old enough to touch the beginnings of the Movement in Japan were on hand and gave testimony to their conviction that they have lost something vital in the merger that swallowed up some sixteen Disciple churches and 666 members in what is now known as Kyodan (United Church of Christ of Japan).

It must have been with pathos when a number of these old Disciples gathered around the tomb of Charles E. Garst on Oct. 19, 1983 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of his arrival in Yokohama, having been sent forth by the old Foreign Christian Missionary Society. The Disciples thrived in Japan for a time, due largely to the fact that they preached the gospel after the tradition of Charles E. Garst, a West Pointer who gave up a military career to be a missionary. The old Disciples still around, some of whom were baptized by Disciple missionaries, will tell you they once had a church at every major railroad stop between Tokyo and Sendai, 200 miles to the north. But no more.

As part of the Kyodan they can now call only Kyodan-appointed ministers, open membership is required, and there appears to be little if any connection with their past, though they still immerse new members. Around the grave of their fallen missionary, who died within 15 years after coming to this pagan land, they appeared to be a “cut flower” people, the remnant of a church bereft of its historical roots.

It is a scene that might be viewed by American Disciples of Christ with profit in their passion (“official” at least) for union with the United Church of Christ. Union in the Kyodan and the UCC might not be what Barton Stone had in mind when he spoke of “sinking into union with the Body of Christ at large.” In any event, people need to know who they are and where they are going. Roots have meaning.

Folk from the other two wings were kind enough to wait on me for their memorial at the Garst tomb, so the celebration was a few days late. Mark Maxey, longtime missionary in Kanoya, spoke on Garst’s work at the old Aoyama cemetery, and I addressed a dinner gathering of 60 of our people on the values of our heritage at the nearby Aoyama wedding hall, where the expensive specialty was (believe it!) raw fish, and this on our knees before low Japanese tables. Maybe it was because we started on our knees that it went so well! It was a beautiful fellowship.

The next day, Nov. 7, we met all day at the Ochanomizu Church of Christ, non-instrumental, which is sometimes called “brother Bixler’s old church,” which has been visited by hundreds of American Church of Christ folk through the years, including me in 1963. They chose to allow their facility to be used, which is elegant and adequate, without actually “sponsoring” the event, but their people attended, including the present minister, Shiro Obata, and they tendered every courtesy. What else in Japan!

I wrote home to Ouida that it was one of the greatest days of my life; and others were equally extravagant in their estimates, with one seasoned missionary saying, “We’ve waited a hundred years for this!”

Missionaries who had been in Japan for years met together, sat together, prayed together, sang together, ate together, studied together for the first time. And they were all shades of persuasion, some having studied at Sunset School of Preaching in Lubbock, which is generally viewed as rather “right wing,” as well as Harding Graduate School. Some of the more “moderate” brethren thought these might have a problem in adapting to such a gathering, but they were as delighted with it as the rest of us and proved themselves to be Christian gentlemen. There was not one untoward incident. This did not surprise me, for I meet so many who do not fit the mold that others make for them that I assume we all want to “receive one another even as Christ has received you.”

I gave two addresses on the catholic principles of our heritage, showing how our pioneers based unity and fellowship on those universals on which all Christians can agree, and I warned against exporting our sectarianism like we do other American products. There appeared to be general agreement that there is no way to be serious in our plea for unity so long as we demand precise uniformity of doctrine and practice.

I was pleased to visit the campus of Ibaraki Christian College and speak in chapel on “Ghandi, Socrates, and Jesus: their Commonality as Great Teachers.” While longtime known as a “Church of Christ” college, ICC has largely gone the way of most church-related schools and is more secular than it is Christian. The same day I was in the home of Masao Suzuki and his wife Mitsue in Mito and spoke at the non-instrument Church of Christ next door, where Masao faithfully ministers, on the meaning of the gospel.

While in Tokyo I was also in the home of Harold and Lois Sims, longtime missionaries to Japan, supported by Christian Churches. Harold has the reputation of being unusually articulate and literate in Japanese, and I felt I was in good hands when he interpreted for me at our gatherings.

I was delighted to be in the homes of nationals as much as I was, which are usually quaint, small, sparsely furnished with “beds” on the floor , and hospitable. Tea is frequent and inevitable and at all hours, part of the hospitality. The women are quiet and obedient. I could not get used to the women walking behind us men out on the streets. It is not that I don’t trust them behind me, but that I wasn’t raised that way.

But I have written to Ouida that she is going to have to change her ways! —*the Editor, from Tokyo and Chiang Mai*

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Travel Letter . . .

TEACHING ROMANS IN THE HEART OF ASIA

There are those precious memories that linger with us. One that I will take home with me from Thailand is when 20 students stood at the close of one of our classes and read in unison in Thai those great lines in Rom. 11:33-36. We had given several hours to a study of Paul's world view, as set forth in Romans 9-11, and it seemed appropriate to join him in the doxology at the end. I do not understand Thai, but I am persuaded that such praise as "Oh, the depth of the riches and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out" pleases the God of history in all tongues of earth.

We concluded that section of our study with the conviction expressed by the apostle, that "God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all." No wonder Paul praised God! If one does not clearly see God's mercy he will never clearly see the message of Romans.

I am now sitting in the home of Jerry and Pam Headen in ancient Chiang Mai City, which finally became a part of old Siam, known today as Thailand (meaning *beautiful land),* but the people have always been known as Thais. I flew here on Thai Air, stopping for a week of meetings in Tokyo. After three weeks of teaching at Chiang Mai Bible Institute, a school sponsored by Christian Churches back home, I will take a sleeper train for an all night journey to Bangkok, the nation's capital, where I will board a Thai Air Boeing 747 for a direct flight of some 20 hours to Dallas-Ft. Worth, with stops in Tokyo and Seattle. Due to gaining a day in flight, I will arrive the same day I leave. Missionaries of yesteryear, who spent months coming to Asia, could never have imagined such conveniences.

I am also partly tourist in that I bought myself and my sons silk shirts, my daughter a silk purse, and Ouida yards and yards of bolt silk. What else but Thai silk in Thailand! It makes me think of the aphorism that Ouida has always quoted from her father: *You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.* But you *can* make a silk purse out of Thai silk, which may be as wise an aphorism.

Jerry is on the faculty at the Institute, Pam teaches English to Thais, and their three young daughters attend an international school (English). They have been here long enough, six years, to acquire a facility with the language, especially Jerry who preaches and teaches in Thai with gusto.

Now that I am retired from the college classroom and am rich (by my standards, not Ouida's), I am giving time to help ease the busy schedules of teachers in such schools as this one. If the Lord wills, I hope to help out in other such mission stations for a few weeks at a time in my remaining years. While I have to teach in such places through an interpreter, this has the advantage of reinforcing what is said in two languages since many of the students are also studying English. It also compels the teacher to strip away the fat and keep his lessons lean. If you want a challenging pedagogical experience, try teaching Romans to foreigners through an interpreter.

I will not bother you at this point with my opinion that our confusion of tongues is part of the curse that sinful pride has hung on us since the early history of mankind. Nor will I burden you with the details of my hope that one glorious language (probably not English!) will be ours in the gracious inheritance of God's tomorrow, on a new earth.

Speaking of the memories I will take home with me, my visit to a Lisu (pronounced Lee-sue) tribal village one weekend, where I slept on a bamboo bed that rested on a dirt floor in a bamboo hut, will always be a part of me. One of my students, Ahtapa Seenlee, was going home for a visit and I conned him into letting me tag along, riding behind him on a rented motor bike.

We found his parents out harvesting rice in their paddy. We worked alongside them until dark, bearing the sheaves of rice, that had been cut and tied, to the father, whose name is Ahlepe, who stacked them for further drying in the field. With our help he soon had an impressive stack well over his head. In two weeks he will winnow the rice from the chaff. As we worked I began singing "Bringing in the Sheaves," informing Ahtapa, who speaks English, that the hymn was written by our great singing evangelist of yesteryear, Knowles Shaw. On our way back home the next day Ahtapa, astride the motor bike, was singing "Bringing in the Sheaves"!

The older Lisus chew betel nut, a tobacco-like substance that reddens the lips and gums and blackens the teeth (which they view as beautiful), and which produces a smile that would shock most visitors. It also rottens the teeth, so Ahtapa wanted me to talk with his parents, who are believers, about quitting the habit. The Lisus, like all Asians, respect age, especially an aged teacher, so he was confident they would quit if I advised it.

Once in from the field, preparations for supper began, and that is most of their life: working in the field and trying to stir up enough food to stay alive, which is mostly rice. A separate and smaller bamboo hut, also with dirt floor, serves as the kitchen, which is furnished only with a small earthen stove with metal grate. I watched with great interest as the father cooked the rice, manipulating the coals of fire to get the desired temperature. Ahtapa cut up the chicken we had brought along (a company meal!), which was mixed with fresh greens from the field. A kettle of hot tea rounded off a super meal for Lisu country, especially when one counts the roasted corn kernels we had for dessert. We all feasted with thanksgiving, which included a two-year old grandson who eyed me with great suspicion.

Until bedtime I taught them the Scriptures, which reminded me how much illiterate people or even literate people with no Scripture to read can learn about the Bible if they have a teacher around now and again. I stayed with the basics — the beatitudes, the golden text, the golden rule, the greatest commandment, the fruit of the Holy Spirit, the meaning of the gospel, the meaning of baptism. Without mentioning the betel, I did stress Christlikeness by showing that our bodies are a temple of the Spirit and that we want to keep our minds and bodies clean for God’s indwelling. I told them that I noticed how they brushed up the place (with a homemade straw broom!) when I came around. How much more should we straighten up bodies and minds for the Holy Guest of heaven!

Not only did they delight in the Scriptures, but they were touched that I would come to their humble home. “Y ou are an old man and it is not easy for you to do this,” they told me through their son. Most of the Lisu’s never live into their 60’s and the mortality rate for their newly born runs about 50%, which may be a blessing. The government has a sterilization program for them, but not until four of their children live beyond infancy, so that there will be someone to take care of the parents in old age.

As I lay alongside Ahtapa on my bamboo bed that night, beside the table where we had eaten (the parents, grandson, and a daughter were behind a partial partition in this one and only room), I pondered the age old problem of why so few have so much and so many

have so little. I thought of how I could bless this community with “things” I could pick up for them from my neighbors’ garbage on my morning walks back home. But how would I get it to them?

I came to see while there, however, that *money* or a lack of it is not the problem with such tribal villages, which number in the hundreds if not thousands in this part of Asia, many of them being refugees from oppressive countries. I saw no starvation, no bloated stomachs. Their children are well fed — rice fed, which is adequate. They are poor, some very poor, but that is not their chief problem. They are blighted by ignorance. In this village of 59 families there are scores of children but no formal education at all. This problem is complicated by the fact that these tribal folk are a minority people who are not fully accepted by the general Thai population, something like Indians and blacks in America.

The missionary community in Thailand, which is considerable, gives much of its time to these tribal peoples, the Lisus being only one of many. I have visited with missionaries who live among these tribes, who have no written language, so as to learn their language. They then use their expertise to put said language into written form, and finally into portions of Scripture. Other missionaries teach hygiene, nutrition, medicine, farming methods. In short they live among them and show them how to improve their lives. The missionaries turn to these tribal villages because they are more susceptible to the gospel than the Thais in the cities, who are so steeped in Buddhist culture. Many among the tribes are now Christians, who may one day be able to take the gospel back to the countries from which they had to flee for freedom’s sake — China, Burma, Laos, Cambodia.

I arose from my bamboo mat as early as any of the others and was met by a glorious Lord’s day morning. For sometime I walked the countryside alone, pausing to study the very tall palm trees (70 feet?), the rushing water brooks, and neatly groomed gardens with their impressive growth of lettuce. Back at the Senlee home we had our rice breakfast and spent more time with the Scriptures. A few others in the community joined us for the “breaking of bread,” except that we had no choice but to break rice, which, the way they cook it, can be *broken!* And we used tea for “the cup.”

It reminded me that our Lord was in a similar situation when he “took bread,” which happened, due to it being Passover week, to be unleavened. But he did not *choose* (and certainly did not *prescribe)* a certain kind of bread. He simply took what was available. I assume he would have taken rice had he been in a Lisu village.

What impresses me about our diverse cultures is not how different we all are but how much alike. *Romans* talks about us all as it assures us that there is something dreadfully wrong with the human race. Sin has laid a heavy hand upon us all, and its destructive force is evident around the world, subjecting all creation to frustration, Paul tells us. But he also tells us that the creation "groans as in the pains of childbirth," waiting for its redemption. And "We ourselves," he tells us, "who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies" (Ro. 8:23).

It is in this hope that we are saved, the apostle adds. And that hope makes all the difference, whatever side of the world we are on. *—the Editor, from Chiang Mai, Thailand*

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RENEWAL THROUGH RECOVERY (7)

W Carl Ketcherside

The greatest of the ancient scientists was Archimedes. He was born at Syracuse about 287 B.C. He had a head start because his father was Pheidias, the noted astronomer. Time would fail me to detail for our readers the successful experiments and discoveries of this brilliant man. One writer has said, "Almost intoxicated with the vision of power which he saw in the lever and pulley, Archimedes announced that if he had a fixed fulcrum to work with he could move anything." It is said of him that he announced, "Give me a place to stand on and I will move the earth."

Within three hundred years someone did just that. Using the "Rock of Ages" as a fulcrum and the Holy Spirit as a lever, the apostles moved the world. Without the use of eloquent wisdom, the rhetoric of the philosophers, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power, they sallied forth into the world of the Mediterranean. Millions of slaves existed in the Roman Empire. They were regarded as non-persons, as tools and machines, by the society of the day. Hopeless, they heard a message of hope; loveless, they heard a message of love; faithless, they responded to a message of faith. One of the apostles wrote about the call which penetrated their hearts, "Not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were of noble birth, not many were powerful."

By the middle of the second century that was no longer the case. Philosophers began to embrace the message. The call was sounded out and heard in the groves and porches which constituted the schools of philosophy, it penetrated the consciousness of the lecturers and they embraced it. The deserter from the faith whose ambition it was to restore the old

pagan gods, the emperor Julian the Apostate, first barred Christians from teaching, then barred their children from even attending public schools. He said, “It is bad enough to be shot down in full flight, but it is even worse when the arrows are tipped with feathers taken from our own wings.”

By the middle of the third century it was all over. Two great ideas had met head-on. One had been forged on the battlefields of the world. It was wrought in agony and despair. It left behind a trail of battered cities, dying men and ravaged women. It was bred of savagery and lust. Its motto was “Might makes right.” The other originated in the courts of heaven. It brought, healing, health and happiness. Its motto was “Right makes might.” It took no lives, but freely gave them. The only blood it shed was the blood of its own proponents. But it had the power of the Spirit, brilliant, scintillating, penetrating, and the wisdom of this passing age was vanquished before it. No earthly might could resist its power — no army, no phalanx, no mass of marching men.

Today we look back upon the dewy freshness of the ekklesia. And we wonder what has happened. Let us wonder no more. It is apparent. The power has gone off. Not long ago we had a frightful storm sweep across our area. Wires were blown down. Clocks stopped. Refrigerators ceased to function. The lights were inoperable. The power was gone. Everything was still in place. The mechanical fixtures were still intact. But we were reduced to using candles which glowed feebly like fireflies through the murky gloom. That is what has happened to the called-out ones. Once they shown as lights in the world, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. They were like a city on a hill, a beacon beckoning in every direction. Then the power went off.

It did not go all at once. It gradually ebbed away as other things than Jesus became the center. Everyone was still in position. They were going through the motions. They were singing songs, offering prayers, delivering homilies. But no one was listening. They were not even listening to themselves. Bible studies became diatribes. Prayer meetings were excused to do everything but pray. Blackness settled upon hearts. The works of the flesh became more manifest. Depression was felt. People dropped out and could give no reason except that their needs were not being met. And still the merry-go-round kept turning. It went ceaselessly on as if it knew no stopping. And that’s where we are now. The world of mankind passes gaily on its way and leaves us mired in the sticky clay of indifference with our wheels spinning.

There is a solution. We must recapture the apostolic power. It was this which enabled men to look tyrants in the face without flinching, to face beatings which left their flesh hanging in strips and the bones exposed, to look death in the face as they confronted the whitened fangs and fetid breath of angry snarling beasts in the arena. It was this which enabled them to die daily. It was promised to them before "he went back to glory. He opened their minds to understand the scriptures, because the burden of that which is written is only understood by open minds. It can never be fully grasped by minds which are closed by tradition, selfishness or hatred. How he opened their minds we cannot tell, but we do know that he immediately said, "Thus it is written." And then he recounted again the fact of his death and its effect.

He told them that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached among the nations. Not just to the Jews, but to the Samaritans, the Romans, the Greeks, the barbarians. The preaching should begin at Jerusalem because that is where they were. It should always begin where we are. Where we are is our Jerusalem. But it must never stop there, either with them or with us. Then he told them something very significant. I am not sure they fully understood it. I am not sure most of us fully understand it. "You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send the promise of the Father upon you, but stay in the city where you are until you are clothed with power from on high."

They could not be witnesses until they had power from on high. There are two kinds of power. One kind everyone has. So Peter said, "Why do you stare at us as though by our own power we had made him walk?" Such power does not qualify one to be a witness of spiritual things. Natural events can be substantiated by natural power. Supernatural events require supernatural power. That is, power from on high. It is part of the promise of the Father. Men must wear it like a suit of clothes. It surrounds them. It keeps them from being naked.

At his ascension he said "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." A witness without power is an anomaly. But the divine dynamic, the exceeding energy which drove them into all the world of their day in spite of hardship and hunger, of pounding and persecution, of death and destruction, was from on high. It animated and vitalized the body. The flesh profited nothing. The thing that counted was the mission. And before they died they could take the words of the psalmist about the starry heavens, and appropriate them to themselves. "Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world."

This was not the result of their working in God. It was the result of God working in them. There are three passages in Ephesians which are pregnant with power. One is found in chapter 1, verse 19. “And what is the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe, according to the working of his great might.” Three of the rich Greek words for power are found in this tiny verse — dunamis, energeia, ischus— dynamic, energy and strength. They are immeasurable. Even in these days of computers they are still beyond us, still in the great “out there.” But they are actually resident in one who truly believes. Let your mind feast again upon the superlatives of this verse. They are available unto us.

The second is in chapter 3, verse 7. “Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God’s grace which was given me by the working of his power.” Notice again that this power is at work. It is seething, fermenting, driving, drawing, sending. And it provides grace as gift. We are not dispatched powerless as ministers of the gospel. The third is in chapter 3, verse 20. “Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly, than all we ask or think.” The power at work is not controlled, manipulated, regulated or governed by what we think. That power, in those who really believe, governs what we think.

Those who worship the power of the human mind can never admit that anything happens in them which they did not originate, or over which they exercise no control. These are the modern gnostics. They are true humanists and thousands of them profess to be Christians. But there is a power at work within us. It is immeasurable. It is great. It is mighty. It exceeds our ability to verbalize, to sermonize, or to put in words. It lies in a realm beyond our thought processes. It is “far more abundantly” able to provide a dynamic than we can ask, dream, envision, fantasize, or think. No wonder Jesus said, “I will not leave you orphans.” No wonder he declared that the other Counselor, would dwell with us, and be in us. Praise God for the Other Comforter.

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BOOK NOTES

From the Pinnacle of the Temple by Charles Farah deals with the tough question of when faithful prayer ends and presumption begins. He handles the question of whether we should expect miracles from our prayers as well as anything I’ve read. 5.50 postpaid.

If you or anyone close to you have a drinking problem, you will find new hope and new approaches in *Getting Them Sober* by Toby Drews, which we can send you for only 3.50 postpaid.

One of the most readable and enlightening studies of the last book of the Bible is *Interpreting Revelation* by Merrill C. Tenney, which is 9.95 postpaid.

Do Yourself A Favor: Love Your Wife by H. Page Williams has become a best seller with over 300,000 sold. Almost any person will gain much from this book, and it has transformed a lot of marriages. We have restocked this item at 3.50 postpaid.

A dynamic study of the relationship between the church and the kingdom is Howard Snyder's *The Community of the King,* which we highly recommend. 6.95 postpaid.

James Dobson hails the *International Children's Version* as a Bible the kids can understand, and you will be pleased with this simple but accurate version for your children or grandchildren. New Testament only. 12.95 postpaid.

A number of items out of our heritage will interest you. *The Memoirs of Alexander Campbell* by Robert Richardson, two volumes in one, is still in print at 21.95; *Life of Elder John Smith,* which is the story of old Raccoon, by John Williams, is 12.95; *Elder Ben Franklin: Eye of the Storm* by Earl West, which is a new publication, 14.95; *Recollections of Men of Faith* by W. C. Rogers, which is the story of 12 pioneers by one who knew them. 5.95 All prices postpaid.

Your Stone-Campbell Movement fills a long-standing need for an accurate and unbiased account of our heritage. I intend for this praise to be shared with her who has been your equal partner through the years. —*Cecil Hook, New Braunfels, Texas.*

I feel that you wrote with increasing power as the book progressed. The last two hundred pages packed a real punch. —*Gene Shelburne, Editor, Christian Appeal.*

Garrett presents a view of the Restoration Movement different from that generally seen by those in the movement, refuting the naive idea of many that Campbell "restored" the original New Testament Church. Strongly recommended. —*Curtis Dickinson, Editor, The Witness*

I have read your history and enjoyed it greatly. It is an important contribution to our heritage. —*Jerry Taylor, Union Christian Church, College Park, Georgia.*

(We will send you your own personal copy for 21.95 postpaid, if you remit in advance. Or you might do as many have done, get up a club of eight readers for this journal, including your own, at 3.00 each (total of 24.00) and we will send you a copy of the history free of charge.)

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

One of the professors at Abilene Christian University gave a speech in chapel in praise of Martin Luther, a kind of gift to the reformer on his 500th birthday anniversary. It is safe to assume that many in the audience, made up mostly of Church of Christ youth, would have no problem in accepting Martin Luther as a brother in Christ, even if he was never baptized by immersion. The next thing we may hear from Abilene is that some of our people will be giving tribute to Luther *in a Lutheran church* —like Pope John Paul did! Is our world changing too fast for you?

A Church of Christ in the Ft. Worth area has decided it will ordain its elders in the future with a "laying on of hands" ceremony, as per the teaching of Scripture. This is not the practice of our churches, and we commend those who lead the way in more meaningful, scriptural practices.

College Press begins a new publication this month dedicated to the unity of the Body of Christ at large. Tabloid in style and called *One Body,* the paper will be edited by Victor Knowles. The subscription price is 6.00 per annum and the address is Box 1132, Joplin, Mo. 64801.

Our son, David Garrett, who is called Ben at home, after two degrees at Abilene is now youth minister at the Church of Christ in Chillicothe, Mo. His mother, eager for him to make his first trip home at Christmastime, called to make sure he would be on time. He explained that he would have to come the day after Christmas, for "I have to work on Sunday"!

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READERS' EXCHANGE

I wanted to tell you how much I have enjoyed reading *Restoration Review.* It never ceases to amaze me how my perception of Church of Christ people has changed since knowing you. As a Southern Baptist I share your concern about the bitterness and separation that exists between cousins in the faith. - *Ted Thompson, Dallas, Tx.*

(While I appreciate these kind words from a beloved friend, I must demur in one respect. I have no cousins in the faith. Ted Thompson is my *brother* in the faith, not so much because he is a Southern Baptist, but because he is a follower of Jesus Christ. —*Ed.*)

I continue to enjoy every issue. I believe that you and Carl Ketcherside have done more for our denomination than anyone since Stone and the Campbells. -*Howard Taylor, Corbin, Ky.*

(Believe me, I include this letter not so much because of the kind but extravagant estimate of Carl and me, but because of the very unusual reference to "our denomination," which I find encouraging. Rather than resorting to some euphemism, such as "our fellowship," we should candidly accept denominational status, for the Church of Christ is obviously a denomination. It is being a sect that we must avoid, and we can be anti-denominational in that we can be a "denomination in protest," looking to that time when denominations will be no more and all God's people will be one. We can make an important contribution to that end, but not by playing such games as "We are not a denomination but all others are." —*Ed*.)

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